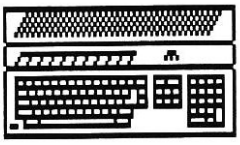
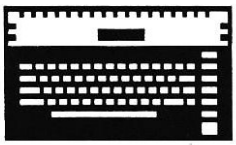
XIO3



Nov./Dec. 1992



A Newsletter produced by the Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts, 1003 Amphion St, Victoria, B.C. CANADA V8S 4G2

Editor's Mumblings...

I don't have much to say this time except that this is it!! The last issue of the year.

Just a reminder that there is no meeting in December, and the January meeting is actually our Annual General Meeting and this meeting will feature...that's right...ELECTIONS!!! Vote for your favorite sucker! No, just kidding. This meeting is an important one and of all the great metings in the year, I urge you to come to this one! Come and participate in the democratic process, and show your support for the club.

I have enjoyed being the Editor of the XIO3 over the past year and I hope you have enjoyed what the newsletter has become. I know I have.

Anyways, as I stated before, not much to say this time, except I hope you like the newsletter and if it is not premature, ***Merry Christmas!***

Chris Sherwood
Editor, XIO3

8-bit SIG

Next meeting: November 29, 1992

at George Rose's place, 7972 Galbraith Cres. in Central Saanich.

If you need directions or info, Call George at 652-0572.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

January 23, 1993

Topic: *ELECTIONS*

Positions up for grabs:

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
8-bit Librarian
ST Librarian
Editor

G.C.A.C.E. EXECUTIVE

President: Grodon Hooper
Vice President: John Picken
Secretary: Rowland Grant
Treasurer: Mike Harrison
Editor: Chris Sherwood
ST librarian: Ted Skrecky
8-bit Librarian: George Rose
BBS Sysop: Bob Nex

CREDITS

The XIO3 is a publication of the Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts, 1003 Amphion Street, Victoria, B.C., V8S 4G2.

The XIO3 is published using an Atari 1040 STe and ISD's Calamus Desktop Publishing Software. The newsletter masters are printed using a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet IIP+

COPYRIGHTS

All articles contained in this newsletter may be reprinted, except when copywrited. All reprinted articles must give proper credit to the author and the source publication.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25.00 per year for family memberships. Membership includes a subscription to the club newlsetter, XIO3, access to over 300 8-bit and 90+ ST disks, and if you are into telecommunications, increased time and upload/download ratio on the official club BBS, the Pothole BBS, (604) 642-6795, 3-2400 bps, 24 hours, 7 days.

MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month except December at the Saanich/Victoria Branch of the Victoria Public Library. Meetings start at 7 pm and usually run until about 9 pm. Copying of club disks, both 8-bit and ST usually takes place at meetings, unless the librarians cannot make it with their machines.

ADVERTISING IN XIO3

Members can place classified ads (ie: Buy, Sell, Swap) for computer related products free of charge.

Commercial advertisments must be submitted as camera-ready artwork and be pre-sized. Please mail the artwork along with payment in full to Garden City A.C.E. care of the editor. Newsletters are published in January, March, May, July, September and November. The deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month in which the newsletter is being published.

The rates for commercial ads are as follows: Full page - $15.00. Half Page - $8.00, Quarter Page - $5.00, Business Card - $3.00. Please call the Editor for additional information.

Peeking Around

by Gordon Hooper

Welcome to new members NICOLA CHALKE, YVES VIAL, and DARYL TAYLOR ... A fine time was had by all who attended the Special Interest Group meeting at GEORGE ROSE'S house last September 20th, except possibly BOB ETHERIDGE. All I saw of him that afternoon was his butt in the air. His head was deep in the innards of George's Xerox copy machine. George handed a beer in every now and then as a bribe to Bob and both he and the machine emerged in apparent good working order later on, in time to say goodbye. Others enjoying George's hospitality were MIKE & TARA HARRISON with children AURORA and STEPHEN, RON De POL, ROWLAND GRANT, BUD MAINDONALD, RON BRACKENRIDGE and myself. Oh yeah, JOHN PICKEN showed up, but will not be allowed at future SIG meetings because of his boorish behaviour. Speaking of the SIG, the next one will be at George's house at 7972 Galbraith Crescent on November 29th. All club members are welcome, starting at noon ... An APB is out for BOB NEX. He hasn't been seen in GCACE circles since the Seahawks last won a game, which was a long, long time ago ... Our October 25th general meeting featured a highly interesting demonstration of MIDI for the 8-bit and ST. Former GCACE member GEOFF CORRY demonstrated his music-making ability with his 8-bit approximately two years ago, but this time had a new sound generator that changes the original input to and from the computer into sounds of different instruments. BRIAN WATT and MARTIN HERGT demonstrated how the input was made from a keyboard to an ST on 7 tracks (for this demonstration, more are available), and then through the sound generator. They ended up with a short song consisting of 7 different instruments. All this sound was sent out digitally by the ST computer directed through the sound generator. Our thanks to all three gentlemen for a great demonstration ... STEVE LEMMEN putting in long nights trying to make a printer interface for me that will allow both printers to be connected at the same time. This part was easy. The hard part is to make them both work ... CHRIS SHERWOOD moving to a new apartment. He says it's only a rumour that he was evicted from his previous residence for having too many loud, bawdy parties. How come I wasn't invited, Chris? ... Have you been reading the messages from TED SKRECKY on the Pothole BBS? He's been saying he now has a Space 1999 stun gun. I assumed this was just another example of his widely-developed fantasy world, but he actually brought it to the November executive meeting. He bought it from a model shop in London. That's the one in England. Set him back around eighty bucks, but when it got here, it wasn't even painted. Now you know why his pseudo is CyberSucker ... Be sure and send GORD all the lowdown on what misdeeds other GCACE members are into at 386-0857 ...

GARDEN CITY ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS

Atari News & Rumors

by Rowland Grant

The Atari Falcon 030 has been displayed in public at last. It looks like a standard ST in a light grey case with dark grey keys. The big difference is inside. The Falcon is not a further upgrade of the ST or TT line, it is a new computer with many new capabilities. Since the Falcon uses a 16 MHZ 68030 microprocessor and a TOS based operating system (MultiTOS) it can run almost all of the ST software available. But the Falcon uses a second microprocessor, a Motorola Digital Signal Processor (DSP56001) running in parallel and at 32 MHZ to handle the video and sound information. This makes the essential functions of the Falcon very fast indeed, possibly faster than anything available from the competition. What? With only a 16MHZ CPU? Well, I was at a local computer fair (more about this later), looking at the new Amiga 4000. A dealer came up and boasted that when the 80586 chip, running above 60 MHZ is released, his computers could outstrip anything Commodore produced. The Amiga people had heard all this before and were ready for him. They pointed out that a better, faster CPU would do nothing more on the motherboards that he is selling, in fact the internal hardware he supplies can't really cope with the current '486 chips. Back to Atari.

The Atari Fair in Dusseldorf has been reported to be very well organized and successful. Numerous Falcon computers were present, although none were for sale. The Falcon's many video modes were demonstrated on huge multi-faceted screens. The true colour modes that provide 65536 colours in various resolutions were most impressive. There is an overscan capability so that you can use the whole video screen. It can genlock with an external video source so you can capture video screens. A special overlay mode enables you to add titles to these screens or produce special effects. Amiga watch out! You can use a standard Atari colour monitor. But there are also a number of VGA colour modes, thus you could use a VGA monitor if you wished. The ST monochrome output can be emulated as well.

The Falcon has MIDI (in out/through) ports, something like the ST. But a new co-processor can generate 16 bit sound using eight channels for recording or playback. A headphone jack handles the stereo sound output. A stereo microphone jack allows real-time input of sound. For instance, your voice could be digitized and added as a sound overlay to a computer video display. Of course, once digitized, the input sound can be modified to create special effects. The quality of this sound is better than you could get from a CD. The multi-media computer is the current buzz word. With its powerful video and sound capabilities, the Falcon 030 is a true multi-media computer and it is targeted for home use.

There are many other hardware features. There is an internal clock with battery backup. There is an internal "processor-direct" expansion bus for 80386SX emulation or for other co-processors.There is a choice of three RAM boards providing 1MB, 4MB or 14MB of special high speed RAM. SIMM sockets are not provided. However, Atari says that its RAM boards will be competitively priced. While a hard drive can be connected to the SCSI/DMA port, there is provision to connect an IDE type 2.5in hard drive internally. The standard STE ports are supplied except that the Centronics Parallel printer port is now bi-directional. Also a LAN networking port of the AppleTalk variety is supplied. The Falcon is expected to be available some time in November. It will be released in two configurations. One will list at $799(US) for 1MB of RAM and no hard drive. The other will have 4MB of RAM and a 65MB internal hard drive and list at $1399(US). For the power, this is a very good price. To put it in perspective, a recent London Drugs sale advertised upgrade boards to give a PC similar video and sound capability for almost $700 (CDN). And if you wanted your PC to equal the speed of the Falcon's screen response you might have to add a video accelerator board as well.

The Falcon uses the 1.44 MB disk drive, which has become standard nowadays. I expect that future models of the STE will also come with this drive, since they seem to be cheaper than the older 720K models. Yes, apparently Atari intends to retain the 1040 STE as its introductory model. It is the Mega STE that is being displaced by the Falcon. The rumour is that the Mega STE line has been discontinued. Since the TT has its own unique features, Atari plans to retain it for now as the Atari business computer. Atari is continuing to pursue a niche in the printing trade and will need the TT for this market. Future models of the TT will be supplied with Multi-TOS and Font Scaling Manager. This system software combination puts GEM up there with Windows and the latest Mac desktop. The list price of the Falcon is about the same as the 1985 price of the 520 ST. So in time we can look forward to lower Falcon prices and possibly the end of the ST line. At least I hope that we can look forward to future Atari models.

A lot of effort will be needed to get Atari back in the race. Apparently, even the Tramiels were beginning to feel discouraged by Atari's shrinking market share, and the difficulty of coping with the clones. In the USA, individual regions will be targeted and major shows will be staged to attract dealers. When enough regions are served by an operating dealer network, Atari will launch a national advertising campaign. Prior to this, advertising will be through dealers with some cash assistance from Atari. I expect that Atari will be relying on user groups to help out in this scheme. Certainly this will enable Atari to put money into production rather than advertising, and it may be the only way to go.

At our local computer fair, Atari and Apple were not represented. Well, there were a few Macs being used to sell other products, but there were no Atari's, even among the MIDI displays. This may be due partly to the fact that the local music stores (our only Atari hardware dealers here) are low on stock. Now that Atari Canada has been shut down, these dealers are getting no attention. Apparently sending to Sunnyvale for new stock is not a verypopular prospect. It's too bad that a Falcon 030 wasn't available at

con't on page 5

con't from page 4
this show. It would have blown everything else away. But even a display of the current STE and TT lines would have attracted a lot of attention. I looked carefully at the new Amiga offerings. The Amiga has not been changed significantly for years. The new A600 is little more than the old design miniaturized. The new Amiga 4000 does use a 68040 CPU and may be very fast. However the only new capability is its enhanced screen modes. I suspect that Atari could easily match the 4000 by putting a similar CPU on the TT. So Atari products may still be comparable or better than its main competitors. Too bad nobody knows about it.

The home computer market has become a prime target of the big guys. Even IBM was represented at the local show. IBM had placed a half page advertisement in the local papers covering its complete PS/1 line. Then each model was demonstrated at the show (all networked too). Of course IBM has a local dealer who can see to all this. However, the point is, if IBM is working this hard, Atari is going to have to work a lot harder. And Apple has been talking about selling a lower priced, consumer oriented line of computers under the "Performa" label. Would this put Apple in direct competition with Atari? No matter how good it is, the Falcon cannot sell itself. Few, other than Atari users, are even aware of its existence. Every major town (including Victoria) needs an Atari dealer who will publicize computers just as effectively as the Commodore and IBM dealers are doing. At our fair, Moebius Computers even gave away an Amiga A600 as a door prize. These local computer fairs attract people who are interested in any kind of computer. Just the right people to see the new Atari products. So next year, I hope that we see Falcon door prizes and well-prepared demonstrations at local computer fairs around North America.

Actually, Atari has made a start in that direction. A Falcon was given away as a prize at the recent Glendale (California) Atari show. But the winner had to take a rain check since no production models were available. The Falcon demonstrations were the main attraction, but the vendors present reported excellent sales of ST software and accessories. While most of those in attendance were Atari enthusiasts, a number of "outsiders" turned up to see the Falcon. One was Jerry Pournelle, who writes for Byte Magazine. He is reported to have been very impressed by the Falcon's sound and video capabilities. Jerry is interested in alternatives to the Mac/PC systems and asked for a Falcon to test and write about. So we should see the Falcon 030 reviewed in Byte soon. There are rumours that several Amiga software developers also turned up at the Glendale show to see the Falcon. A good sign!

Atari finally got around to showing the Falcon to the Boston Computer Society. Bill Tracy of BCS kindly sent me his impressions of the meeting. About 130 members attended the presentation given by Sam Tramiel, Richard Miller (engineering), Bill Rehbock (software) and James Grunke (music). Some Future developments for the Falcon are a 68040 CPU and voice recognition. Bill Tracycommented that no printed material was available for those interested, and that he was somewhat disappointed at the presentation. However, Atari is going to donate a Falcon 030 to the BCS Resource Center. A good move. Perhaps the Falcon can give its own demonstrations better in the hands of members of the BCS. The BCS show was the official American debut for the Falcon. In addition, the Falcon was (or will be) aired on a national TV program.

In the last issue of XIO3 I remarked on the proliferation of ST magazines in Britain as a sign of Atari well-being there. A note by Les Ellingham in his New Atari User has dispelled my optimism. Apparently all the ST publications no longer send magazines to news stands on a sell-or-return basis. Les interprets this as a response to a drop in news stand sales. He should know. The New Atari User is not making enough from news stand sales and will now sell through subscription only. Les mentioned that Atari's share of the British software market dropped from 25 to 6 percent, while the Amiga remained at 22 percent. I can't vouch for these figures, but then this is a rumours column. Another set of figures that I wonder about was published recently in the Toronto Globe and Mail. On the basis of almost a million new computers of all brands sold in Canada in 1991, Atari was reported to have 4 percent of the market share. This translates to about forty thousand computers and would include the ST/TT line, Portfolios and clones. That's better than I would have suspected, considering the availability of Atari products in B.C. It's even more impressive if you consider that IBM and Apple tied at about 10.8 percent market share for each. According to that report, Atari sold more computers in Canada than Radio Shack! But they shut down Atari Canada anyway.

Atari 8-bit computers were alive and well at the Dusseldorf show. There were clubs showing off 8-bit demos. There were dramatic hardware hacks such as a repainted 600XL with "MEGA XE" silk screened on it. There were numerous software vendors. For the XE, there were 32 new commercial games for sale along with all sorts of utility programs, even operating systems. A demo of a game called "Brundles", a Lemmings look alike for the XE was seen at the show. Hardware was also available including disk drive enhancements, memory upgrades and stereo sound chips. Even more surprising, Atari 8-bit computers (labelled 800XE) were being sold! Also from Germany is a circuit board which enables you to use a 1.44 Meg 3.5 inch drive mechanism. This board comes complete with standard 8-bit Atari serial ports so that the 3.5 inch drive can be used like any other Atari drive. I hope that this product becomes available over here. The main challenge to Atari 8-bit longevity is the disk drive.

In July, Unicorn Publications agreed to provide publishing services for the new 8-bit magazine called ATARI CLASSICS. Ben Poehland is the managing editor. Atari Classics is a separate enterprise, independent of Unicorn Publications and AIM magazine. There is some seed money for this project. So the first issue (and the onlyissue for 1992) will be sent free to all those who mailed their pledge cards way back in March. Next year Atari Classics will be published bimonthly. Ben has lined up a number of contributors who used to be published regularly in the old Antic and Analog. These authors will give things a push, but I presume that contributions from anyone would be welcome. Ben lists topics such as user applications, hardware modifications, tutorials, programming and software reviews. The annual subscription will be $25 (US) plus extra to cover the additional postage to Canada. Also, program listings in the magazine will be available on disk. Three disks a year are

con't on page 6

con't from page 5

planned; the disk subscription will be $9.00. Members of Ol' Hackers have volunteered to run off the estimated six hundred disks every four months. Well, when the going got tough, the tough did get going. Now it's up to all Atari 8-bit enthusiasts to subscribe and contribute.

Another enterprise that merits the support of all Atari 8-bit users is New Atari User in England. About three-quarters of the New Atari User is devoted to 8-bit Atari's and this is one of the few magazines left that regularly publishes program listings. And on the topic of publications, Atari Advantage, which lost its staff to Atari Explorer recently, has been sold to Capitol Publishing in Houston Texas. The new owner, Neal Symms seems to be an Atari enthusiast, and he has found some helpers with lots of publishing experience. Atari Advantage will resume monthly publication in October. The PDC public domain software source seems to have been acquired by (or has turned into) Purple Mountain Computers of Belleview Washington. In addition to the PDC line, they sell used Atari hardware and software.

Purple Mountain also markets new hardware such as ST RAM upgrade boards, the Link interface and the Gemulator. So far Purple Mountain seems to be the main source of the Gemulator ST emulation system, and the price has been reduced to $300 (US) with TOS ROMs thrown in free. However, their most interesting product is the Freedom floptical drive. As I understand it, a floptical drive can read standard 3.5 inch magnetic floppy disk formats, but in addition can read and write to 3.5 inch optical (laser) disks. Such floptical disks can hold up to 21 MB of programs. The Freedom drive uses ICD software and the ICD Link adapter. The introductory price for the drive, complete with the ICD software and hardware and a floptical disk is $400 (US). Additional floptical disks sell for about $25. Perhaps, as prices drop, we will see future Atari computers supplied with floptical disk drives. Could the development of floptical technology displace hard drives on smaller computers? Stay tuned.

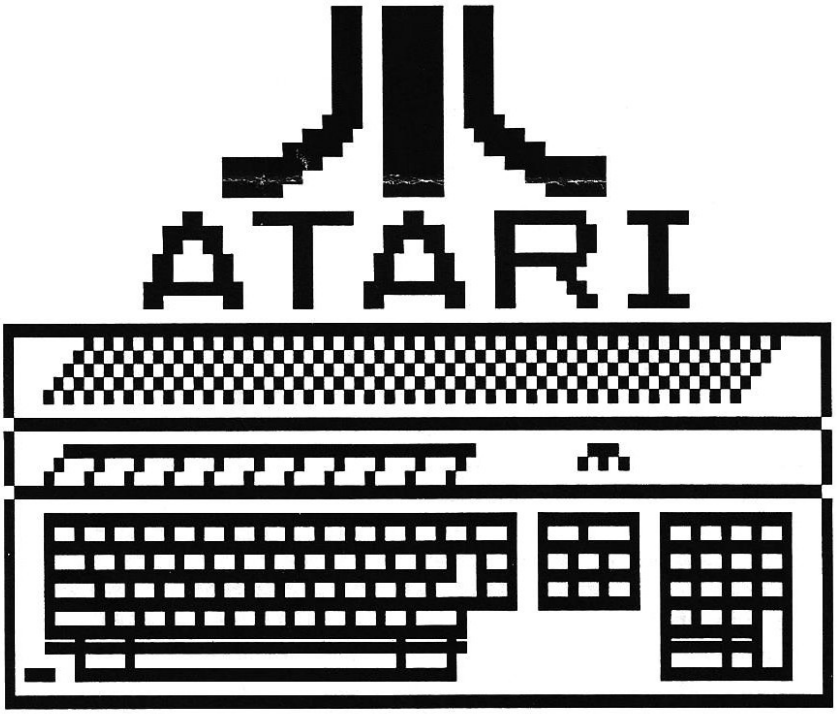
SAVING ATARI

By Douglas Skrecky

Atari is going down for the count. It needs a saviour and I nominate me. Yup, stand aside Sam & Jack, you've had your chance - now its mine. Here's how I propose to refloat the good ship Atari.
First of all you have to manufacture what consumers really want instead of what you delude yourself into thinking that they should want. If you do the later you start going belly up. This explains the current situation guys.

Home computers are not and never have been what the masses want. Manufacture home computers and you wind up like Coleco, Texas Instruments, etc & etc. Most home computers have never been profitable for a very good reason. The majority of home computer owners buy them just to play games on them. Word processing and other such pursuits are the hobbies of only a few weirdos, who in any case are well served by buying more serious "office" computers which feature things like hard disks, software compatibility with other office machines, etc. In any case what the home computer buyer usually wants is a game machine pure and simple. Game machine manufacturers make money because they are selling something the public really wants. Home computer manufacturers have to price down their machines to compete and can not usually make any profit as a result. Either make game machines for the masses or office computers for corporations. Forget home computers.

Add a hard disk to an ST and you have an incompatible office computer which virtually no responsible corporation would buy. Add Unix capability and you have an expensive maybe that might sell provided that developing it doesn't bankrupt our corporation in the first place. For a quick buck nothing is likely to be as profitable as stripping the ST down to produce a minimum cost game machine, which requires special cartridges which software developers have to licence from us. By minimum cost I mean just that. No keyboard, no laser gun, no printer ports and only the absolute minimum amount of ram needed to run cartridges -say about 100K or so. Take care to ensure the ST game machine actually runs ST games software with little or no modification. If it doesn't you start out with an orphan games console that might or might not ever catch on. This is the last roll of the dice guys-make it a good one. Class dismissed.



Club Meetings

by Rowland Grant

The September general meeting featured a demonstration of Calamus desk top publishing system by your intrepid editor, Chris Sherwood. Chris used his 1040STE, mono monitor and a laser printer for the demonstration. I should leave it to Chris to supply the details in a feature article. Chris made it all seem so easy. Impressive printouts appeared as if by magic. At our request he created an icon for the 8-bit SIG: a foaming beer mug with an '8' on it. Chris then printed out the icon, poster size.

I delivered the poster to George Rose at the next 8-bit SIG. There was quite a bit of activity. Ron De Pol arrived with a car full of 8-bit equipment and software that he had just purchased. Some time was spent going over all of that. There was lots of discussion as we perused the back issues of ROM and Creative Computing (remember that magazine?) that Geoff Corry donated. And of course there were refreshments, wheat beer this time, and very good too!

The October general meeting featured MIDI systems. Geoff Corry showed what an 8-bit system could do. Geoff connected my 130XE and Indus drive to a Hybrid Arts MIDI interface. The MIDI connection went to the compact case of the Roland Sound Canvas which was connected in turn to the Roland Sound Brush and two speakers. The Hybrid Arts software acts something like a spread sheet except that pitch and duration of tones are entered. This program causes the computer to send out the control codes which the Roland equipment turns into sound. Geoff types code into the spread sheet and slowly constructs a complete musical composition, one note at a time. The MIDI equipment does the rest, supplying sampled sound to emulate most instruments. This digitized sound information can be stored on a 3.5 inch disk since Sound Brush contains a disk drive. Geoff also ran some pre-recorded material from disk. The neat thing about digitized sound is that you can slow down or speed up the tempo of the music without changing the pitch.

We then moved on to the ST based system. This was demonstrated by Brian Watt and by Martin Hergt of Tempo Trend Studios Ltd. Brian brought his 1040 ST equipped with a Steinberg Midex expander giving four MIDI outs and extra cartridge slots. This was attached to Geoff's equipment and to a piano type keyboard. Martin used a sequencer program, Final Cut, to simulate the production of multi-track records. Martin began with percussion and created a melody using string sounds. This was harmonized with piano, flute and choir, each with its own track. Martin estimated that the sound system that they were using with the ST would cost about $1400. This includes Sound Canvas, a velocity sensitive keyboard and the Final Cut software. Brian and Martin then showed how musical scores could be created, starting with a file of digitized music. They used a program called QBase for this. They took one of Geoff's music files and displayed the music on the monitor screen. The edited score can be sent to a printer. Music desktoppublishing is available to everybody. Finally Brian and Martin ran Band In A Box, this is a program that creates musical accompaniment to your melody. As often happens when there is a good thing going, the time runs out. The assembled company gave Geoff, Martin and Brian a round of appreciative applause.

ST librarian, Ted Skrecky, is working on a revised and expanded ST catalogue. When this is done a copy will be sent by mail to each member of record who is a ST user. Also Ted has updated the 8-bit catalogue and copies of this will be mailed out as well. I should note that Ted is donating the ST disks for this project.

Tesseract
Computer Systems & Software

RICHARD PETERSON

City Centre Plaza
204 - 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 3K4
FAX (604) 386-2515
PH. (604) 382-3475

Richard can order software as well as hardware for all your Atari needs. Give Richard a call!!!

THE COMPUTER GEEK

By Gordon F. Hooper

I think I'm turning into a much-dreaded computer geek. It started with a trip to a computer store, just to look around. There should be no legal way for me to enter these places, the same as book stores. I cannot go into a book store without buying something. GCACE member Ron De Pol of Russell Books wears an extremely wide grin when he sees me walk through his door.

At any rate, I was looking around the computer store at all the IBM products, which are useless to me with my 8-bit Atari, when I spotted what was called a power center. This is basically a power bar and does the same thing, except that it sits under your monitor and has a lighted rocker switch to turn on and off each individual component of your computer system.

The thing which caught my eye was the rocker switches, each of which had an LED in it. Under each switch was a label, COMPUTER, MONITOR, PRINTER, AUX1 and AUX2. There was also one labelled MASTER. You can imagine my delight when I found that pushing each switch caused an LED to come on.

I guess this comes from growing up watching Star Trek when it originally aired. I mean the real show, with plywood sets, people who couldn't act and lots of flashing lights. You'd think after 25 years of trying they would have learned how to act, but after viewing Star Trek VI recently, the only thing they learned was how to go grey and get fat. Anyhow, I grew up thinking that anything that had flashing lights was new and exciting and a harbinger of the future. A display of LED's puts me into immediate attract and extract mode. The lights attract my attention and make it much easier for the salesperson to extract the money from my wallet.

51 dollars and 87 cents later, I was the proud owner of my very own power center, which I needed like Canada needs another constitutional debate. This couldn't be considered one of my more astute moves seeing as how it did the same job as my $9.95 power bar, but it sure did look great after I set it up. The problem came in setting it up.

The desk my computer sits on was built by my favourite uncle when I was in Grade 5. It always was a nice desk, but as my computer-geekdom grew, I had to build small extensions on either end to house my ever-expanding computer system. Every component you add has it's own power cord. Now that I have a computer, monitor, amplified speaker, two disk drives, a modem, two printers and an XEP80, which is a gizmo that gives the 8-bit an 80 column display, there's a lot of wire behind that old desk. And I mustn't forget the power center which originally caused the problem. It too has its own cord.

I don't know how a perfectly straight cord which you run from the individual item to a wall plug or power bar can magically become tangled up with every other cord back there, but it looked like a deranged mating ritual of singularly horny snakes behind my dear departed uncles desk. The poor old guy would have been shocked.

Given that I couldn't move the desk because of the extensions I built on either side, how was I going to get the wires from the floor up to desktop level to plug them into the power center? For that matter, what the hell am I going to do when when I have to move? I guess I'll just have to sell the house minus my computer room, and remain holed up there for the rest of my natural life.

Being a budding computer geek, I tried to think of a high tech way to sort out the wires, but ended up using that venerable old standby, the metal clothes hanger. I unwound it, straightened it out and put the plug end of the components wires onto the hooked end of the clothes hanger to lift them up. I bet somewhere along the way even Stephen Jobs used the ubiquitous coat hanger in the process of making the first practical home micro-computer. Probably he ran out of wire at 4 am one morning and pressed the coat hanger in as a substitute. I know I made an emergency electrical repair with one on my car late one night. You don't want to know what the clothes hanger was doing in my car, why I was out late at night, or why I'm now spending time at the library looking for information on STD's.

After everything was connected and I had gloated about how impressive the lights looked for a while, I sat down at the computer to write a letter to William Shatner asking for his advise on how overact. I wanted to turn off the printer and use the other one, so with a quick glance at the power center, I pushed the switch. Oops. It was the COMPUTER switch I turned off. Too bad I hadn't saved it to disk. After swearing for a few minutes, I realized if I had been satisfied with the original power bar this couldn't conceivably have happened. Trust me to come up with a brilliant new way to lose data that costs money. That must be the reason they made me president of a computer club.

Oh well, I guess I'll go out and trade in my glasses for the horn-rimmed variety and buy a plastic pocket protector so pens won't stain my shirt. Maybe I'll even go whole hog and buy a bow tie so that I look like the ultimate computer geek, an IBM owner.

RANDOM.BAS

(I think '.BAS' is the right extention for this program, Ed.)

By Douglas Skrecky

Editors note: I found this among the submissions from Doug, and there was no accompanying documentation, so I tried to interpret this the best I could.

```
' This program determines if the function "drnd" is a correct implimentation of
'        the minimal standard random number generator as outlined in ...
'           "Random Number Generators: Good Ones are Hard to Find"
'                    By Steve Park & Keith Miller
'  ....Pages 1192-1201 Vol.31 No.10 1988 Communications of the ACM
'
'         - GFABASIC ATARI ST VERSION BY Douglas Skrecky July 1992 -
'     - Code should run on all GFABASIC platforms with no code changes -
'     - [perhaps future versions of GFABASIC will replace the built-in -
'      - random number generator with this superior one (hint) (hint)] -
'   - With minor grammarical changes code should run on any basic compiler -
'    - which supports IEEE double precision 64 bit floating point format -
'
PRINT "Testing double precision random number generator -please wait"
@drandomize(1)
FOR i%=1 TO 10000
  x=@drnd
NEXT i%
result=x*2147483647
IF result=1043618065 THEN
  PRINT "Pass -valid implimentation of the minimal standard generator"
ELSE
  PRINT "Overflow occurred -generator requires double precision floating point"
ENDIF
END
'
FUNCTION drnd                    !drnd is a double precision version of rnd which
  LOCAL a,m                      !returns a random number in the range of 0 to <1
  a=16807                        !why 16807 ? (because it works)
  m=2147483647                   !m is the largest possible 31 bit number
  IF drnd_seed=0 THEN            !initialize drnd_seed
    drnd_seed=m*RND(0)
  ENDIF
  temp=a*drnd_seed               !using temp cuts down on 1 multiplication
  drnd_seed=temp-m*TRUNC(temp/m) !this is where we fiddle with the bits
  RETURN drnd_seed/m             !random result must be less than 1
ENDFUNC
'
FUNCTION drand(max_rnd%)         !... double precision version of rand
  RETURN TRUNC(max_rnd%*drnd)    !produces a random integer less than max_rnd%
ENDFUNC
'
PROCEDURE drandomize(init_seed) !... double precision version of randomize
  drnd_seed=init_seed            !reinitializes drnd_seed used in drnd
RETURN                           !if input is 0 drnd is randomly seeded
```

For sale, call Steven Lemmen, 595-7811, offers and trades considered,
Sept 13/92

Hardware For Sale

Atari 520 ST with 2 megs of memory, external DSDD drive,TOS 1.0 , $300
Atari 520 STFM with 1 meg of memory, internal DSDD drive,TOS 1.0 , $200
Computer Eyes, colour video digitizer, cartridge and software, $125
Atari 1020 printer/ plotter for 8 bit, 4 colour pens, $25
Atari ST SC1224 colour monitor, $225
HP Deskjet Plus inkjet printer, $350
Atari ST external DSDD disk drive, power light, floppy flipper, $100
Monitor Master, colour/ monochrome switch box, $25
ICD AdSCSI ST hard drive host adapter for SCSI embedded drives, $100

Software For Sale , originals with boxes and manuals

Double Dragon, ninja fighting game, 2 player simultaneous, $15
Menace, game, $10
Neo Chrome, graphic paint program, $10
Quest for the Time Bird, graphic adventure, $15
Rick Dangerous, game, $10
Stunt Track Racer, driving game, modemable, $10
Turbo Outrun, driving game, $10

Books For Sale

Analog Compendium, 189 pages, $10
Best of Antic Anthology, 298 pages, $10
The Atari ST Book, Vol 1, Ralph Turner, 159 pages, $10
6502 Assembly language programming, Lance Leventhal, $10
Machine Language for Beginners, Compute book, 350 pages, $10
2nd Book of Machine Language, Compute book, 446 pages, $10
Mapping the Atari, Compute book, 194 pages, $10
Misc magazines, Antic, Analog, ROM, Start, Creative Computing, Byte,$1 ea

Upgrades and Repairs

ST mouse repair, most problems are cable or buttons, $25
Floppy flipper for disk drive, write to back of disks, $25
Dual TOS 1.0 and 1.4, maintain compatibility, not STEs, $115
1 meg memory upgrade to 520 STFM, type with internal drive, $125
2 meg memory upgrade to 520 ST, type with external drive, $225
2.5 meg memory upgrade to 520 or 1040 ST with internal drive, $225
4 meg memory upgrade to 520 or 1040 ST with internal drive, $425
4 meg memory upgrade to 1040 STE, type using SIMMs, $250
4 meg memory upgrade to Mega 2, $225
Repairs to Atari ST and 8 bit equipment, reasonable, negotiable
Custom Atari upgrades and modifications, reasonable, negotiable